



COVENANT United Methodist Church

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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

The Ways to Celebrate the Christmas Season

Advent and Christmas season is already here. Advent is the four-week season when all Christians, regardless of their denominations, expect, prepare, and celebrate the birth of Jesus and, at the same time, are looking forward to the second coming of Jesus on the final day. It is the joyful and exciting season that brings hope, faith, joy, peace, and light to the world, as the Advent wreath candles represent. Many people in the world celebrate this season beyond their culture, even religion. It is relatively easy to find many unbelievers worldwide enjoying this season by sharing their gifts and having a party. Also, I still vividly remember that some Buddhist monks joined the Christmas worship service to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

I believe many church members already have joyful plans, such as decorating Christmas trees and houses, purchasing gifts for loved ones, and having a family gathering.

Covenant UMC has already begun celebrating this Advent season by decorating all the church buildings. Last Sunday, November 26th, right after the worship service, many church members stayed and joined in



decorating the whole church with Christmas trees, wreaths, and various ornaments. I want to thank all the church members who joined this celebration. In my personal life, my three energetic children reminded me that I need to pay attention to not only the communal celebrations but also the family celebrations. My wife and I began building up some to-do lists for the Christmas season, such as preparing Christmas gifts, buying birthday gifts (Two of them were born in this busy season!), setting up Christmas trees, and writing Christmas cards. Plus, we realize we need to prepare the house for some family members from South Korea this month. All these things make

my wife, and I feel busy and slightly overwhelmed. However, in general, we are excited and joyful. I believe all church members share this joy to some extent.

Yes, for believers, rejoicing in the Christmas season and having fun is the right and good thing more than any other person. However, I hope our excitement, joy, and busyness will not prevent our church members' attention from the most crucial reason for our joy: Jesus. More specifically, the relationship with Jesus. Thus, I am preparing and suggesting spiritual ways to celebrate this Christmas that will bring you much more joy and meaning.

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Advent and Christmas Eve Worship Services

One of the most important and meaningful ways to celebrate Christmas is to participate in worship services during this season. As you know, worship is the central way to deepen a relationship with God. Indeed, we will sing some traditional Christmas carols and light the Advent candles in the services to celebrate this season. Also, we will examine the familiar Christmas stories once again from the perspective of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. This will reveal hidden meanings of Christmas and another aspect of God we did not know. In addition, some special music from some church and community members will enrich our worship experience.

There will be a couple of special worship services. On December 17th, our Sunday School and Youth Group kids will perform the Christmas story instead of my long sermon! Please check your calendar and join this great play. This would be an excellent chance for church members to enjoy Christmas. On December 24th, we will have a Christmas Eve Candlelight service at 6:30 PM with special music.

This year, the worship committee and I plan to do a realistic version of the nativity scene with some church members and have the time to reflect on it. It should be fun and meaningful. Take advantage of this special worship service! I have one more worship service that you need to remember. This year, Christmas Eve falls into the 4th Advent Sunday. Thus, we will have two worship services on December 24th: the 4th Advent Worship Service at 9:00 AM and the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 6:30 PM.



December Worship and Mission

DATE	CALENDAR	SERMON	WORSHIP	MISSION
12/3	1 st Advent Sunday	Sermon Series: "Joseph's Christmas 1"	- Communion	- Charge Conference (3)
			- Advent Candle	- Lose Offering:
12/10	2 nd Advent Sunday	Sermon Series: "Joseph's Christmas 2"	- Special Music	"Gift for Family"
			- Advent Candle	- Angel Tree
12/10	2 nd Advent Sunday	Sermon Series: "Joseph's Christmas 2"	- New Member	- Lose Offering:
			Celebration	"Gift for Family"
			- Choir	- Angel Tree

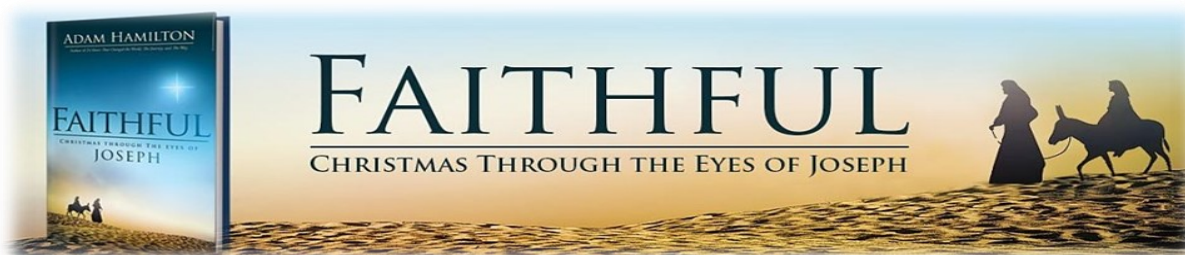
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12/17	3 rd Advent SUNDAY	CHILDREN'S PROGRAM	- Advent Candle - Bell Choir	- Children's Program REHEARSAL (16) - Lose Offering: "APPORTIONMENT" - Angel Tree (Due: 17) - Cookie Walk (16-17)
12/24	4 th Advent Sunday	Sermon Series: "Joseph's Christmas 3"	- Advent Candle - Bell Choir	- Lose Offering: "Apportionment"
12/31		Sermon Series: "Joseph's Christmas 4"		- Lose Offering: "Apportionment"

Other Meaningful Ways to Celebrate the Christmas Season

Other than worship service, there are various ways to celebrate the Christmas season meaningfully and spiritually. The first thing that comes into the mind is to have a personal devotional time. There are a lot of devotional books out there, and I strongly recommend using these resources in your devotional time. However, my strongest recommendation is the Bible, especially one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John). How about reading the book of Luke during this Christmas season and reflecting on Jesus' life and ministry once again? For your personal use, the Bible reading chart is below.



Reading a good book about Christmas is one of the great ways to celebrate it. I strongly recommend "Faithful" (written by Adam Hamilton) this year. The book's author brings great and innovative insights into Christmas stories from Joseph's perspective. In addition, it is easy to read. Furthermore, this book is my primary material for the upcoming sermon series, "Joseph's Christmas." If you read it with my sermon, it will enrich your spiritual life. If you are not a reader, joining a Wednesday Bible Study group will be a good option. Based on videos, they will discuss Christmas stories from Joseph's perspective every Wednesday at 9:30 AM in the choir room.

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Lastly, sharing your love with other neighbors through one of the church missions would be the best way to celebrate Christmas. The Little Food Pantry mission that Covenant UWF (United Women in Faith) began this year will be an excellent way to reach out to the marginalized in our neighborhood. The need for this mission is much more than we expected, so we stack this little pantry at the back of the church building three or four times a week. Giving away Christmas gifts to unknown low-income families through Angel Tree will bring you authentic Christmas joy. We are also collecting socks, mittens, and hats for the unfortunate children during this season. If you lose all those chances, you can still give away your monetary resources to our neighbor through the Christmas Eve offering. The church leaders decided to send all our Christmas Eve offerings to the Fond du Lac Holy Family Warming Shelter, which opens this year. These are programs and suggestions for your meaningful and spiritual Christmas season. I hope you will find a relationship with Jesus in a new way through these Christmas worships and missions.

LUKE READING CHART FOR ADVENT



<i>Day</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Scripture</i>
Day 1	12/3	Luke 1 – 2	Day 12	12/14	Luke 13
Day 2	12/4	Luke 3	Day 13	12/15	Luke 14
Day 3	12/5	Luke 4	Day 14	12/16	Luke 15
Day 4	12/6	Luke 5	Day 15	12/17	Luke 16
Day 5	12/7	Luke 6	Day 16	12/18	Luke 17
Day 6	12/8	Luke 7	Day 17	12/19	Luke 18
Day 7	12/9	Luke 8	Day 18	12/20	Luke 19
Day 8	12/10	Luke 9	Day 19	12/21	Luke 20
Day 9	12/11	Luke 10	Day 20	12/22	Luke 21
Day 10	12/12	Luke 11	Day 21	12/23	Luke 22

POINSETTIAS FOR CHRISTMAS

If you are interested in purchasing a poinsettia to decorate our sanctuaries for Christmas, please contact the church office or use the order form in the bulletin. Poinsettias can be donated in honor or memory of a loved one. This year's flower colors will be red. The cost is \$13 per plant. Payment must be turned in with the order form no later than December 17th. Thank you

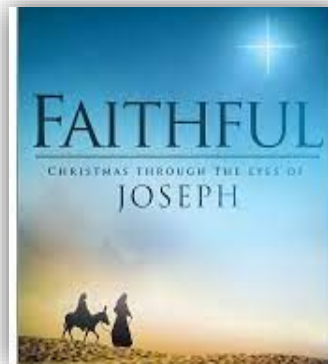


Bible Study, "Faithful—Christmas through the Eye of Joseph"

From his beginnings as a humble carpenter to his all-important role as the earthly father of Jesus Christ, Joseph's place in the nativity story is sometimes overlooked, but contains valuable lessons for all of us. Absent from much of the biblical narrative, Joseph never spoke a word, but his courageous actions were crucial to the birth of Christ and God's salvation plan for humanity. Joseph's story is much like our own. In life, we encounter circumstances that we would never have chosen for ourselves. At times, it can be tempting just to walk away. Joseph provides us a great example of humbly obeying God even when we don't understand and faithfully moving forward in the strength that God provides.

Join this small group study and conversation on Wednesdays from 9:30-10:30 am in the Choir Room. This new series starts November 29, 2023. There is no registration, no fee, and no work between sessions. Come as you are, eager to ask questions, learn from each other and discuss.

For more information, contact Denise Retzleff at 920-539-0336. We will use best-selling author Adam Hamilton's book and video series "Faithful-Christmas through the Eyes of Joseph."



CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Saturday, December 9. Meet at Church



Covenant UMC will go Christmas caroling on December 9th. We will gather together at the Church. Then we will visit some homebound and elderly church members for an hour or hour and a half. Everybody welcome! This is a wonderful way to celebrate the birth of Jesus and develop beautiful relationships with other church members!

Come and sing together! Please remember—You do not have to be a good singer to join!

Taxi service to Church

Anyone needing a ride to church to attend worship or other church events, please remember Covenant UMC has an agreement with Quality Cab to provide taxi service. Contact the cab company at 920-929-8888 to make arrangements and tell them the charge is to the Covenant account. Wheelchair cab service may be available on weekdays, but not on Sunday mornings.



Worship Committee

worship & communion on Dec. 3rd
Candlelight Christmas eve service on Dec, 24

In December, we look forward to Advent, a time of spiritual preparation for the birth of Jesus Christ. This is a season of prayer, repentance, anticipation, faith, hope, joy, and peace. Join in worship with other believers each Sunday for scripture, song, sermon, and the advent message.

Start the month with worship and communion of Dec. 3. Come to a special Christmas Eve candlelight service on Sunday, December 24 at 6:30pm where you'll experience the Christmas story. Each time you come to worship, come in anticipation of sensing God's presence and hearing His call for your life.

United Women in Faith; SARA CIRCLE

SARA CIRCLE thanks everyone who helped in any way to make the soup supper and bake sale a great success on Nov. 16th. People enjoyed the variety offered and the opportunity to have an evening of fellowship as well as a meal with us.

Our profit of \$1126.48 goes to the window/door replacement project. It was a great effort with much cooperation and good communication which made it so successful. Thanks a million!



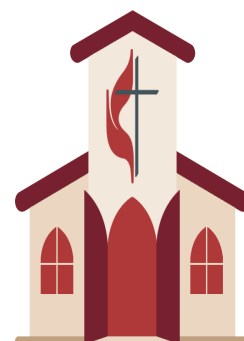
Thank you Note - *Make a Difference Day*

Our Youth Group had a great time serving others on Our Make a Difference Day in November! They were busy painting, raking leaves, trimming bushes, and grocery shopping for others. Thank you so much to our Youth as they truly made a difference for many others!



Ecumenical Thanksgiving Worship Service Report

Thank you for participating in the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Worship Service. From eight different congregations, around 100 people joined the worship service. Around \$600 were collected and given to New Fond du Lac Warming Shelter, 22 hygiene and cleaning supplies were sent to St. Katharine Drexel Shelter, and 51 non-perishable food items were brought to Fondy Food Pantry. Because this is the first attempt to have the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Worship service since the pandemic, this service is a small but important beginning for the unity of the church. Pastor Ho Lee encourages all church members to continue to support this ecumenical movement in this divisive world. FAMA (Fond du Lac Area Ministerial Association) plans another Ecumenical Worship Service to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day.



Pacto de Gracia News

Dear Covenant UMC Members

The Christmas season is a time to be thankful to God for the gift of His son Jesus as our Savior. The Lord constantly blesses us with life and a church to worship him, caring for one another, and serving our community with love.

It is a true blessing to serve God as Pastor of Pacto de Gracia UMC. My wish for each of you is that your heart is filled with love, peace, and happiness in the Christmas season and New Year.



Rev. Janet Martinez

The Mission to Serve

Matthew 25:34-36, 40 says

34 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 40 "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

God gave us the mission to serve the people in need as he did. When we follow Jesus, we follow a servant-leader. Jesus saw the needs of the people, and he responded with loving and compassionate service for God's creation. When we care for the people in need, we are caring for Christ because *"whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*, says verse 40.

I can rejoice and thank God because in October, we started with a Rummage Sale that was open to the community of Fond du Lac and surrounding area. It was the second Saturday of the month. On October 14, 67 people attended and we raised \$311. On November 11, 60 people attended, and we raised \$383.41.

During the 2023 year, we blessed over 60 families with the Community Closet.

All of this work for the community was possible thanks to your prayers, donations of clothing, and household items. It was also possible with the compassionate service of Dana Knack as the coordinator.

Please continue prayers and support for Pacto de Gracia UMC

Rev. Janet Martinez



Gifts for Families

It's that time of year again. We are sponsoring 7 families this year. There are still ornaments to be picked from the tree. If you haven't already done so, you can grab a grocery bag from the narthex with a list of foods to help support our families as well. We are also collecting hats, mittens, gloves, and socks for our families and some of our elementary schools. We appreciate the tremendous support that we receive every year. Merry Christmas, Diane and Shelli



The Annual cookie walk

Saturday, December 16th · 10 AM - 1 PM / Sunday, December 17th · 10 AM - 11AM



The annual cookie walk is planned for Sat. Dec. 16 from 10 am-1 pm and on Sunday Dec. 17 from 10-11 am. As always, we are looking for cookie bakers and candy makers.

Days of the sale you also have opportunities to join us. Please sign up in the narthex as soon as you can. On the 15th we will set up and need much help. We truly appreciate all help so we have a good variety of favorites!

Questions? See Shelli, Jan, Denise or Dea!



Sunday School News

Christmas Program, "Follow the Star"



We plan to do the "Follow the Star" children's program on December 17th during the worship service. All Sunday school children and youth group members are invited to join this great program to celebrate Jesus' birth. We will gather to practice this program on December 3rd and 10th after the worship service. Also, this program's rehearsal will be held in the church on December 16th from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM. If you have any questions about this program, please contact Mona Averbeck, Diane Weider, or Pastor Ho Lee. Here is the December Sunday School Schedule;

DATE	SUNDAY SHCOOL	NURSERY	CHRISTMAS PROGRAM
12/3	No Sunday School	Available	Practice after the service
12/10	Sunday School	No	Practice after the service
12/17	Children's Program	No	Rehearsal on 12/16
12/24	No Sunday School	Available	-
12/31	No Sunday School	Available	-

2024 New Sunday School

We will launch a new Sunday School with more effective programs starting January 14th.

Five dedicated Sunday school teachers are preparing this New Sunday school. However, we are looking for more assistant teachers to make this program more effective and provide a safer environment for children. To be an assistant Sunday School teacher, you do not have to commit yourself every Sunday, but only once a month or every other month. If you are interested in strengthening the Sunday School program as parents, teachers, or assistant teachers, please come to Sunday School Orientation on January 7th, Sunday, at 10:15 AM at the small chapel on the 2nd floor of the educational building.

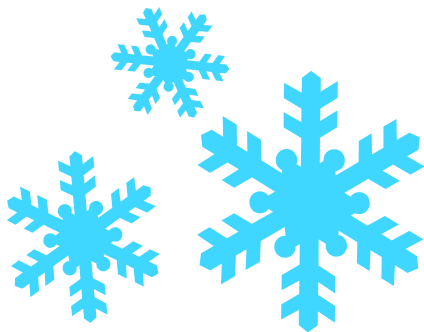
- 2024 New Sunday School: January 14th, Sunday, at 9:15 AM
- 2024 New Sunday School Orientation: January 7th, Sunday at 10:15 AM

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

20th Robert and Janet Lewis

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1st Shirley Krueger
 1st Donna Miller
 3rd Sheila Sayles
 6th Ardis Sherman
 7th Robert Pickart
 11th Fred Baldwin
 18th Gordon Schultz
 18th Donna Baldwin
 29th Dea Hebel



Mission Offerings for December

1st Sunday (12/3) Christmas Gift for Family
 2nd Sunday (12/10) Christmas Gift for Family
 3rd Sunday (12/17) Apportionment
 4th Sunday (12/24) Apportionment
 5th Sunday (12/31) Apportionment



Help Wanted

We are in need of two staff positions and would appreciate it if you could spread the word

Administrative Assistant

Responsibilities include a wide variety of administrative services to the congregation and pastor while functioning as a vital communication hub. This position requires someone who has demonstrated excellence in interpersonal communication, organization, and technical skill.

Key skills include proficiency in word and data processing, desktop publishing, and PowerPoint, as well as ability to update Facebook and the church web site.

Custodian

Responsibilities include cleaning the sanctuary educational building, keeping up with building maintenance, preparation and clean up for special gatherings, building security, and communication with pastor, other staff and the congregation.

Please see Pastor Ho Lee or Diane Weider if you are aware of a possible candidate.

December Worship Volunteers

DATE	Liturgist	Children's Time	Greeter	Acolyte	Live-Streaming	Power Point/ Sound
12/3	Diane W. & YOUTH	Pastor Ho Lee	Jan A.	Charlie A.	Mona A.	Sloan A.
12/10	Mary B.	Diane W.	Jeff S.	Jin L.		Diane W.
12/17	Baldwin C.	Children's Program	Mary L.	Charlie A.	Denise R	Diane W.
12/24		-		Jin L.	Denise R	
12/31	Bill A.	-	Jan A.	Jin L.		

Usher Team Bill Kelly, Dave Gustavus, & Bill Olson

Thank you to EVERYONE who helped in the Service



Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 9 AM—1 PM;
Pastor office Hours: Monday - Thursday 9:00AM - 3PM

December 2023

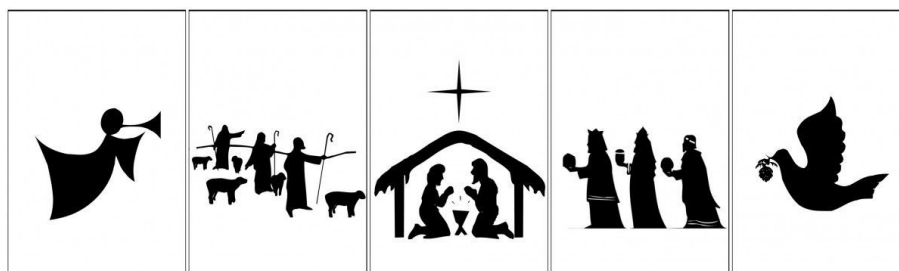
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
12/31 9:00 AM Worship 10:15 AM Choir Practice					1 Pastor's Sabbath	2 Pastor's off day
3 9:00 AM Worship with Communion 10:15 AM Choir Practice 4 PM Charge Conference 5PM Conference Potluck & Mini Business Meeting	4 10AM Worship committee	5 6:30PM Trustee Meeting	6 9:30AM Bible Study 10:45AM Sara Circle	7 Pastor's Visitation 11 AM 2PM	8 Pastor's Sabbath	9 Pastor's off day 8AM Men's Breakfast 8AM—3PM Pacto de Gracia Rummage sale Caroling
10 9:00 AM Worship 10:15 AM Choir Practice	11 10AM Community Service at Lake House 1:00PM Staff meeting 4:30PM Finance Committee	12	13 9:30AM Bible Study	14	15 Pastor's Sabbath	16 Pastor's off day 9:00AM Clean for Sharon 10:00AM Cookie Walk 9:00AM - 11:00AM Christmas Program Rehearsal
17 9:00 AM Christmas Program Worship 10:00 - 12PM Cookie Walk 10:15 AM Choir Practice	18 1:00PM Staff meeting 6:15PM Bell Choir Practice	19 9:30AM SPRC Meeting	20 9:30AM Bible Study 5:30PM-8PM Champions Bingo	21	22 Pastor's Sabbath	23 Pastor's off day
24 Christmas Eve. 9:00 AM Worship 10:15 AM Choir Practice 6:30PM Christmas eve. Candlelight Service	25 Christmas 1:00PM Staff meeting	26	27 8:00AM Women's Breakfast 9:30AM Bible Study	28	29 Pastor's Sabbath	30 Pastor's off day



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Covenant United Methodist Church

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THE ARK *Covenant UMC*

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- Text "give" to 920-267-4801
- Visit our website: covenantforyou.church/give

Main Office Hours

Mon-Thurs
9:00AM-1:00PM

Pastor Office Hours:

Mon– Thurs
9:00am-3:00pm

Submission deadline is the **20th of each month at noon**. Please get your content to the office by this date for the next month's issue. Thank you.

